



DURHAM
Children's Aid Society

120th Annual Report

2025

2026



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge this land is situated within the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, signatories of the 1788 Gunshot Treaty and 1923 Williams Treaties. This land is home to the Indigenous Peoples.

Let us acknowledge the deliberate acts and traumas of the past through authenticity, solidarity, truth, and reconciliation.

Let us celebrate Indigenous communities by being leaders of action in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations.

Let us move forward together with kindness and respect.

MISSISSAUGAS OF SCUGOG ISLAND
FIRST NATION



The Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation moved into southern Ontario from their former homeland north of Lake Huron around the year 1700. The Mississaugas are a branch of the greater Ojibwa Nation, one of the largest native groups in Canada.



This Declaration provides a road map for the Government of Canada and First Nations, Inuit, and Metis peoples to work together to implement lasting reconciliation, healing, and cooperative relations.



The Johnson-Butler Purchase of 1787-88 (the "Gunshot Treaty," referring to the distance a person could hear a gunshot from the lake's edge) is one of the earliest land agreements between representatives of the Crown and the Indigenous peoples of Upper Canada (later Ontario).



The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided those affected by the legacy of the residential schools policy with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences. The Commission released its final report detailing 94 calls to action.



The Williams Treaties were signed in 1923 by the governments of Canada and Ontario and by seven First Nations: Alderville, Chippewas of Beausoleil, Chippewas of Georgina Island, Chippewas of Rama, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

Message from the Board President

As we reflect on the 2025-2026 fiscal year, I am proud of the progress Durham Children's Aid Society (CAS) has achieved during a year defined by transformation, collaboration, and a continued focus on the children, youth, and families we serve. Building on the momentum of our new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, we have completed the first year of a shared journey guided by our commitment to responsive service, community partnership, accountability, and equity.

Much of this progress has been supported by the leadership of Ramona Chereches, whose commitment to building strong relationships across Durham Region has strengthened our ability to work collaboratively with community partners. Under her leadership, Durham CAS has continued to deepen connections with service providers, community organizations, and sector partners who share our vision of ensuring children and youth are safe and thriving within their families, identities, cultures, and communities. The continued growth of collaborative partnerships, including at our Airport Boulevard community hub, has created new opportunities for innovation, coordination, and integrated support for families.

Throughout the year, the agency undertook significant organizational changes to better respond to the evolving needs of children, youth, and families while strengthening accountability, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability. These efforts included enhancements to our organizational structure, investments in specialized expertise, and a continued focus on creating services that are responsive, culturally informed, and grounded in the diverse needs of the communities we serve.

Our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and community engagement remained central to our work. Durham CAS expanded its presence within the community, strengthened relationships with equity-seeking groups, and continued to work alongside partners to promote belonging, safety, and positive outcomes for children, youth, and families across Durham Region.

The agency also continued to make meaningful progress toward long-term financial sustainability while maintaining a focus on delivering effective and responsive services. This reflects our commitment to responsible stewardship of public resources and accountability to the communities we serve.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report are the result of the dedication of our staff, volunteers, community partners, and Board of Directors in close collaboration with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Together, we are building on a strong foundation and advancing a vision where every child, youth, and family has the opportunity to be safe, supported, and successful. As we move into the second year of our strategic plan, I am confident that Durham CAS will continue to strengthen relationships, deepen community impact, and respond to the changing needs of our region.



Vera Mercier,
Board Chair



Message from the Executive Director

At Durham Children's Aid Society, every achievement begins with a simple but powerful purpose: ensuring children, youth, and families are safe, supported, and able to thrive within their identities, cultures, and communities.

As you read this annual report, you will see the many initiatives, partnerships, and accomplishments that shaped our work over the past year. Together, they reflect a year of growth, collaboration, and meaningful progress in advancing our mission and Strategic Plan.

This year marked an important step in bringing our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan to life. We completed significant organizational restructuring to better align our people, services, and resources with the evolving needs of those we serve. These changes have strengthened accountability, enhanced service delivery, deepened community engagement, and built a more responsive and sustainable organization that is well positioned for the future.

Partnership remained at the heart of our work. We continued to strengthen relationships across Durham Region and beyond, deepening collaboration with community organizations, Indigenous communities, service providers, caregivers, youth, and families.

The introduction of our hub approach represents an exciting milestone, bringing partners together to create more integrated, accessible, and family-centred supports. We know that lasting change happens when communities work together, and we are grateful for the trust, expertise, and shared commitment of our many partners.

Over the past year, we also made important progress toward fiscal sustainability, strengthening our foundation for the future while maintaining our commitment to responsive and effective services.

We recognize that advancing equity and supporting staff wellbeing are not projects with a finish line. They are ongoing commitments that require intentionality, humility, kindness, and care. We continued our equity-affirming journey through initiatives focused on addressing

anti-Black racism, strengthening Indigenous engagement, advancing identity-affirming practices, and fostering a workplace culture that supports learning, psychological safety, wellness, and belonging. We remain committed to listening, learning, and growing together.

None of this progress would have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of our staff. Every day, they bring professionalism, resilience, and compassion to some of the most important work in our community, and I am deeply grateful for their unwavering commitment to children, youth, and families.

I also extend my sincere appreciation to those whose support and leadership help make this work possible:

- The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the Durham Children's Aid Foundation, and OACAS for their ongoing support;
- Our Leadership Team and agency leaders for their guidance, vision, and dedication;
- Our foster and kin caregivers, and volunteers for their tireless dedication;
- Our community partners for their collaboration and shared commitment to children, youth, and families; and
- Our Board of Directors and Board President Vera Mercier, for their exceptional governance and stewardship throughout this period of transformation and growth.

Together, we are building a stronger, more connected, and more sustainable organization. Most importantly, we are helping create a future where every child, youth, and family in Durham Region can be safe, supported, connected, and thriving. For that, I am filled with hope and gratitude.

Ramona Chereches

Ramona Chereches,
Executive Director



Durham CAS Strategic Plan (2025-2030)



Our Strategic Plan 2025-2030 is a living roadmap that guides our work every day. Throughout this report, you'll find stories that highlight how we are bringing our strategic commitments to life and making a difference for children, youth, and families in our community.

To learn more, scan the QR code to read the full Strategic Plan on our website.





From Insight to Action: Evolving Services to Meet Community Needs

Over the past year, we have taken significant steps to strengthen our services to ensure families receive responsive, trauma-informed, and equitable support. Guided by our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and informed by extensive consultation with staff and community partners, we undertook a comprehensive agency realignment designed to build a more efficient, and sustainable service model.

The process explored service delivery across the organization, while also considering staff well-being, workload pressures, operational efficiency, accountability, and evolving community needs. Feedback consistently highlighted opportunities to better support families while creating healthier and more sustainable working conditions for staff. The review also included administrative and corporate support functions, not just frontline services.

As a result, we introduced specialized service teams and enhanced family support services focused on early intervention, prevention, and integrated care. We also modified some teams from a blended team structure, allowing staff to develop deeper expertise and provide more focused supports to children, youth, and families. New approaches include dedicated teams supporting intimate partner violence and child and youth advocacy, as well as the introduction of the Supervisor, Indigenous Affirming Engagement and Outcomes role to advance our commitment to truth and reconciliation.

We also expanded our approach to family support, including more intensive in-home services that help strengthen parenting capacity, connect families with community resources, and address challenges before they become crises.

Together, these changes are helping us deliver more coordinated, responsive, and family-centred services while supporting staff and ensuring responsible stewardship of public resources.



Accountability in Action

In 2025-2026, Durham CAS engaged KPMG to conduct a comprehensive financial review to support our commitment to strong financial stewardship, accountability, and long-term sustainability.

The review assessed financial practices, operational processes, and opportunities to strengthen organizational effectiveness. Throughout the process, staff, leadership, and the Board of Directors contributed valuable insights and expertise, helping to ensure the recommendations reflect our operational realities and support quality service delivery. KPMG identified opportunities to enhance financial controls, improve process consistency, strengthen oversight, and support long-term financial resilience.

Durham CAS has since developed and begun implementing an action plan to address the recommendations, reinforcing our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring that resources remain focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Better Together: Expanding Community Partnerships

Just as we have strengthened our internal services through agency realignment, we have also expanded our focus on community engagement and collaboration. Guided by our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, we recognize that achieving better outcomes for children, youth, and families requires strong partnerships and shared responsibility across the community.

Over the past year, we strengthened relationships with community partners through increased participation in events, conferences, awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and collaborative planning opportunities. These partnerships help staff build capacity, share expertise, better understand emerging needs, and identify opportunities to improve services.

The year marked significant progress in several collaborative initiatives. The Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) moved from planning into operation, and the CARE Team secured multi-year funding, ensuring the sustainability of its innovative work addressing child sexual exploitation and human trafficking in partnership with organizations across Durham Region.

We also continued to partner on initiatives that promote inclusion and strengthen community connections. This includes ongoing work supporting Black and Black-biracial children, youth, and families, events that affirm and empower 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and initiatives that advance our commitments to Truth and Reconciliation. These partnerships

help ensure children, youth, and families see themselves reflected in available services and supports.

A growing area of focus has been our hub partnerships with six agencies co-located in our Oshawa office. Through joint planning committees, shared learning opportunities, and collaborative events, partners are identifying service gaps, strengthening relationships, and improving access to resources. By bringing organizations together under one roof, we are creating new opportunities to provide coordinated support and reduce barriers to accessing help.

As we advance our strategic plan, these relationships will remain central to creating more coordinated services, reducing barriers and building communities in which children, youth, and families can thrive.





Strengthening Family Connections Through Kinship and Permanency

This year, we strengthened our commitment to a kin-first approach, ensuring children and youth remain connected to the people, culture, and communities that matter most to them. As part of this work, the Kinship Services teams expanded to nine staff across two teams, reflecting a broader focus on permanency, connection, and belonging.

A key enhancement was the introduction of the Network Connections Facilitator role. Every case now receives a mandatory review focused on identifying family, community, and cultural connections that can support a child's long-term well-being and permanency goals. This child-centred approach ensures that each young person's voice and unique circumstances are considered when exploring opportunities for their future.

The team has also expanded its focus on permanency; rather than following a single pathway, permanency planning includes reunification, kinship, customary care, adoption, and other lifelong connections tailored to the needs of each child or youth. Permanency workers collaborate with Network Connections Facilitators to explore all options. This work is particularly important for children with complex needs, helping create family-based alternatives to group care whenever possible.

Our partnership with Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) continues to be an important part of this work, funding three permanency workers. Durham CAS has taken a lead in helping the

child welfare sector understand the evolving nature of WWK, as it broadens its focus to explore permanency in every sense.

We have also coordinated provincial meetings with other agencies and supported efforts to increase participation in the WWK program across Ontario. By moving beyond the historical adoption-only approach and focusing on each child's unique circumstances, we are creating more flexible pathways to lifelong belonging and stability.



Responding Differently to Intimate Partner Violence

This year, we created a dedicated Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) team in response to the growing complexity and urgency of IPV in Durham Region. Community partners, staff, and families identified a need for a more specialized and coordinated response, and the new team reflects our commitment to evolving services to better meet those needs.

When children are exposed to violence in the home, child welfare involvement must be thoughtful, trauma-informed and grounded in safety. The team is building focused expertise, providing specialized staff training, and supporting families through safety planning, caregiver engagement, and recognizing the cultural, historical and identity-based factors that shape each family's experience.

This work is rooted in partnership. We continue to strengthen relationships with shelters, police, child and family service providers, and community organizations to ensure families receive coordinated and compassionate support. Through outreach, collaboration and partner engagement, the team is helping improve pathways for families navigating multiple systems.

The team aligns closely with our strategic plan by advancing anti-oppressive and intersectional practice, supporting innovative sector leadership, and creating specialized supports for staff engaged in complex work.

Most importantly, this initiative reflects our commitment to listening and responding differently. By building capacity, strengthening

partnerships, and keeping children, youth and families at the centre of our work, we are taking meaningful steps toward a more integrated, equitable and trauma-informed response to intimate partner violence.

Coordinated Support Through the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre

A significant milestone this year was the launch of the Durham Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC), a collaborative initiative that brings together child welfare, law enforcement, medical, mental health, and victim support professionals under one roof.

Developed in partnership with community agencies, the CYAC provides a safe, child-friendly environment where children and youth who have experienced abuse can access coordinated support throughout the investigation and healing process.

The CYAC reflects our commitment to trauma-informed, community-centred service delivery by streamlining access to services and supports. Through a dedicated Durham CAS CYAC team and close collaboration with multidisciplinary partners, children, youth, and families receive coordinated, culturally responsive care focused on healing, justice, and hope.

By centring the voices of children and youth and strengthening cross-sector partnerships, the CYAC reflects the priorities of our strategic plan. Its coordinated approach helps young people feel safe, heard and supported.





People We Served 2025/2026

Services to Families

	2025/2026	2024/2025
Calls to Intake	11,325	10,203
New child protection investigations	3,527	3,250
Open child protection cases at year end (ongoing)	245	285
Families served by Prenatal and Infant Support	32	32

Services to Children

Children admitted to care	38	43
Children discharged	118	117
Children in care served during the year	320	327
Children in care at year-end	202	233
Adoptions finalized	13	15
Community Links	1,274	1,340
Anti-Black racism consultations	1,407	1,178
Foster recruitment inquiries	323	327

Accountability*

Individual Access to Information	1,158	889
Privacy Breaches	11	44

*As part of our commitment to transparency and accountability, Durham CAS reports on service quality, financial stewardship and ethical practice. We are required to report privacy breaches to the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, notify affected individuals and take steps to prevent or mitigate further impacts. As the Commissioner tracks privacy data by calendar year, the figures shown are for the 2025 calendar year.

Financial Summary 2025/2026

Operating Revenue	2025/2026	2024/2025
Province of Ontario	55,197,988	56,122,197
Other	6,929,559	5,635,194
Total	62,127,547	61,757,391
Operating Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	33,107,082	33,950,053
Boarding and Client Services	23,794,627	23,239,263
Administration	4,758,079	5,061,208
Total	61,659,789	62,250,524
(Deficit)/Surplus for the Year	467,758	(493,133)
Fund Balances, as Previously Reported	3,675,761	6,342,164
Adjustment due to Change in Accounting Policy	N/A	(2,173,270)
Opening Balance, as Adjusted	3,675,761	4,168,894
Excess of Revenue Over Expenses/(Expenses over revenue)	467,758	(493,133)
Fund Balances, End of year	4,143,519	3,675,761



Source: Audited financial statements for the year ended March 21, 2026, audited by Deloitte LLP.

Change in Accounting Policy:

Effective April 1, 2025, the Society changed its accounting policy in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards for government not-for-profit organizations, including the 4200 series of standards, as issued by the Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) of the Chartered Accountants of Canada.



Building Trust Through Representation and Relationships

For many Black and Black biracial families, trust in child welfare systems has been shaped by generations of historical and systemic inequities. Our African-Canadian Services (ACS) teams play a vital role in addressing these realities through culturally responsive, relationship-based practice that recognizes identity, lived experience, and community connection. The teams work alongside families from the earliest stages of service, helping to ensure support is provided in ways that are respectful, affirming, and responsive to each family's unique circumstances.

This year, we expanded our Community Links model by embedding dedicated Community Links workers within each ACS team. This innovative approach strengthens prevention and early intervention efforts by integrating community-based support into frontline service delivery rather than treating it as a separate referral process. Community Links workers help connect families to culturally relevant services and supports before concerns escalate, while also providing continuity if additional intervention becomes necessary. Families benefit from a smoother experience and stronger relationships because they are supported by an integrated team.

The impact is felt not only by families, but across the broader community. ACS staff continue to advocate for culturally responsive practice, challenge biases that can affect service delivery, and strengthen partnerships with organizations serving Black communities.

Community members have shared that seeing workers who reflect their identities and understand their experiences helps build confidence in the services they receive. This work reflects our strategic plan commitment to equity-affirming engagement and community partnerships by fostering trust, reducing systemic barriers, and helping families feel supported.

Advancing Equity through Learning and Collaboration

Throughout the year, we have continued to advance our commitment to addressing anti-Black racism through learning, community engagement, and service enhancement efforts. This work focused on strengthening practice, deepening relationships with community partners, and building the foundation for future enhancements to services for Black and Black biracial children, youth, and families.

A significant milestone was the completion of a comprehensive review of the Anti-Black Racism Service Continuum. Through collaboration across service areas, approaches to identifying, addressing, and responding to anti-Black racism were strengthened to support greater consistency across service delivery. This work established a stronger foundation for practice and helped support more equitable service experiences for Black and Black biracial children, youth, and families.

Building on this work, efforts continued to redevelop the Black and Black biracial service model. Through engagement with Black-led organizations, service providers, and community partners, work progressed to strengthen a network of culturally responsive supports designed specifically for Black and Black biracial children, youth, and families. This planning and relationship-building work helped establish a strong foundation for future services that will prioritize healing-centred approaches, positive racial identity development, family well-being, and meaningful connections to community.

The model reflects a commitment to ensuring children, youth, and families can access supports that recognize and honour their unique experiences, strengths, and cultural identities while creating opportunities for earlier intervention and more holistic support.

Additionally, staff participated in a variety of opportunities that supported learning, relationship-building, and community engagement. Staff contributed to the planning and delivery of the Durham Black Health and Wellness Day alongside community partners and participated in sector-wide gatherings including *All In! 2025: Rooted and Reclaiming* and *PowerUp!*. Hosted in Durham Region for the first time, *PowerUp!* brought together Black youth, child welfare professionals, elders, artists, and community leaders from across Ontario. These experiences provided valuable opportunities to deepen learning, strengthen relationships, and share promising practices that support culturally responsive child welfare services.

Together, these efforts expanded community partnerships and laid important groundwork for future initiatives that will enhance access to culturally affirming supports for Black and Black biracial children, youth, and families. By investing in relationships, collaboration, and service enhancement, this work is helping to build a stronger network of supports for children, youth, and families.





Collaboration and Care for Youth at Risk

The Durham Children at Risk of Exploitation (CARE) Team continues to play a critical role in protecting and supporting children and youth who are at risk of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Through our specialized partnership with Durham Regional Police Service and Victim Services of Durham Region, the team provides vital trauma-informed, coordinated support that prioritizes the safety, dignity, and well-being of young people.

Through collaboration, education, and direct support, the CARE Team helps ensure children and youth are connected to the resources they need to move toward safety and healing.



We are pleased that funding for the CARE Team was extended for another five years, ensuring continued stability and capacity for this important work. This important work continues to advance the goals of our strategic plan, particularly our priorities related to community partnerships and innovative leadership.

Recognizing that human trafficking often crosses community boundaries, the team strengthened relationships with service providers and partners across the sector to help create a more coordinated and responsive network of support for vulnerable youth.



The team also shared its expertise beyond Durham Region, contributing to broader sector learning and service excellence by supporting the development of a new CARE Team in Kenora. In addition, staff continue to work with community partners to build capacity and strengthen local supports for youth impacted by trafficking.

Family Support: Meeting Families Where They Are

Over the past year, we transformed how we deliver family support services by creating a dedicated Family Support team focused on helping families thrive together. Staff work directly with families in their homes, helping them navigate challenges, building trusting relationships and addressing barriers in ways that are responsive to each family's unique circumstances.

Grounded in the belief that every family has strengths, the team takes a non-judgmental, individualized approach. Staff listen carefully to children and parents, recognizing that no two situations are the same. Supports are tailored to reflect each family's culture, identity, language, faith, lived experiences, and community connections, helping ensure services are both trauma-informed and culturally responsive.

Family Support staff provide relationship-based support through regular in-home visits while helping families access community resources, education, health care, mental health services, and other essential supports. By walking alongside families and helping them navigate complex systems, the program strengthens family capacity, promotes child safety, and reduces barriers to long-term success.

This evolved service model reflects our commitment to partnership, equity-affirming practice, and community-centred service delivery. By intervening earlier and connecting families with the supports they need, the Family Support team is helping create conditions where children can remain safe, connected, and thriving within their families and communities.

Connecting Families to Community Support

The Community Links program continues to play an important role in supporting children, youth, and families through prevention and early intervention services. When families are facing challenges, timely access to community-based services can often provide the assistance they need while avoiding a more intrusive child welfare response. Working alongside families, the team focuses on understanding their circumstances, building on existing strengths, and connecting them with services that support child safety, stability, and family well-being.

Throughout the year, the team strengthened relationships with community organizations across Durham Region, helping families access a broad range of supports, including mental health services, housing resources, food security programs, cultural supports, and family well-being services. These connections help families build lasting support networks within their communities and reduce barriers to accessing assistance when it is needed most.

Through this collaborative approach, families can receive assistance earlier and in the least intrusive manner possible. By strengthening partnerships and pathways to service, Community Links helps families develop lasting networks of support that promote stability, well-being and connection.





Listening, Learning and Supporting Indigenous Connections

Meaningful change begins with listening, learning, and building lasting relationships. This year, we introduced the role of Supervisor, Indigenous Affirming Engagement and Outcomes, to help guide and strengthen our commitment to Indigenous children, youth, families, and communities. The role was created in recognition of the significant Indigenous population in Durham Region and the need to ensure our services are aligned with Indigenous rights, community direction, and evolving legislative requirements.

These efforts support our strategic plan commitments to expand Indigenous-affirming practices and partnerships, build sector-wide capacity, and foster community-centred engagement. These are important steps toward advancing Truth and Reconciliation and creating a child welfare system where Indigenous children and families feel respected, supported, and connected to their culture and identity.



This position provides guidance to advance Indigenous-affirming practice across the agency through staff education, policy development, community engagement, and consultation. A key focus is expanding training opportunities for staff, including culturally grounded learning experiences and education on the historical and ongoing impacts of child welfare on Indigenous Peoples. The role also supports increased consultation with staff to help ensure services are culturally affirming and responsive to the unique needs of Indigenous families.

In partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations, the position will guide the development of an Indigenous Service Delivery Model, strengthen relationships with local First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners, and increase community engagement.



Creating Belonging Through Visibility, Inclusion and Pride

We are committed to creating safe, affirming spaces where 2SLGBTQI+ children, youth, and families feel seen, respected, and supported. We host events and share information about issues affecting 2SLGBTQI+ communities because education and representation help reduce barriers and strengthen a sense of belonging.

This year, we again co-hosted our annual Youth Pride and Drag Queen Storytime events, which continue to thrive despite challenges faced by similar initiatives in other communities. The ongoing success of these events reflects the passion and dedication of our staff and community partners, whose hard work helps create inclusive and empowering experiences for children, youth, and families.

Our leadership in this area extends beyond Durham Region. We welcomed Cardiff Youth Services from Wales for a day-long exchange on best practices for supporting 2SLGBTQI+ youth. Durham CAS was selected as one of seven agencies in Canada to participate in the visit. We also continue to implement and share specialized training developed in partnership with Egale Canada. The training is now being shared across Ontario to help build more inclusive, affirming, and responsive services for 2SLGBTQI+ children, youth, and families.

Learning Together: Building Capacity

In April, we welcomed 30 service providers to our Community Services Information Fair. The event brought together Durham CAS and hub partner staff to connect directly with local service providers and learn more about the programs and supports available throughout Durham Region.

Participating agencies shared information on a wide range of services, including health care, mental health supports, housing, financial assistance, education, recreation, and child development programs. The fair provided attendees with an opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of available resources, ask questions, and build meaningful connections with community partners.

By creating space for relationship-building and knowledge-sharing, the event strengthened our commitment to collaboration and partnerships. It also helped increase staff awareness of services that may be new to the region or unfamiliar to some staff, enhancing our ability to connect families with culturally responsive and community-based supports.

The relationships developed through the fair support more coordinated service delivery and help staff connect families with services that reflect their needs. They also create opportunities for partners to develop new solutions together.





Residential Services: Strengthening Care Through Innovation

Over the past year, we continued to evolve residential services to better meet the needs of children and youth requiring specialized care. Our focus is on responsive, trauma-informed service, community-centred partnerships, and financial sustainability. To fulfil these goals, the department advanced new approaches that help children and youth remain in stable, family-based environments whenever possible.

flexible supports to foster caregivers, helping them provide stable, nurturing care and respond to changing needs.

Volunteers also play an important role in supporting children, youth, and families. More volunteers are needed, especially drivers who help children and youth maintain important connections with family, school, and community.

Together, these accomplishments reflect Durham CAS's commitment to innovative, child-centred care that strengthens outcomes for children and youth while building capacity for the future.



Family-based care is especially important for children and youth with complex needs. It provides stability, individualized support, and opportunities to build meaningful relationships and a stronger sense of belonging while remaining connected to specialized services.

A key accomplishment this year was the development of dedicated foster homes for youth with complex needs. This approach has helped reduce reliance on group home placements by creating more individualized, family-based options for youth. These enhanced care options support quality care, reduce the need for group care, and promote responsible use of public resources. The team also strengthened oversight of service contracts to help ensure children and youth receive services that meet their unique needs.

At the same time, the need for foster caregivers remains urgent, particularly for those able to support children and youth with increasingly complex needs. We continue to expand community outreach and enhance training opportunities to recruit skilled, diverse caregivers. The team is also offering more



Durham Children's Aid Foundation

This past year was a strong reminder of the many ways the Durham Children's Aid Foundation supports children, youth and families connected to Durham CAS.

Some of that support is practical and immediate. Our Kickoff to Summer event helped provide bikes, car seats, summer toys and other essentials to families and the workers supporting them. Operation Backpack was another highlight, bringing together local charities and community partners to help ensure children and youth across Durham had backpacks and school supplies as they returned to school.

One of the most significant changes this year was the transformation of Holiday Hope. We introduced a new approach that gave families greater choice in creating their own holiday experience. Families were able to shop for their children themselves, selecting gifts that reflected their children's interests, needs and circumstances. The change reflected an important principle in our work: support should meet practical needs while also protecting dignity, encouraging choice and helping families experience moments of connection and normalcy.

Throughout the year, we continued to support camps, post-secondary bursaries and emergency needs, helping address gaps and create opportunities that might otherwise be out of reach.

Equally important are the experiences we help make possible. Children and families attended National Ballet of Canada performances, Toronto Raptors and Oshawa Generals games, ski programs, monster truck events and other special outings. In child welfare, these experiences matter. They create positive memories, strengthen connections and give children and youth opportunities to participate in the kinds of everyday experiences that contribute to confidence, inclusion and belonging.

None of this happens without community. From McHappy Day to volunteers, donors, community partners and Durham CAS staff who attended events, wrapped gifts, volunteered their time and championed our work, we are grateful for the shared commitment that makes these opportunities possible.

Whether it is a backpack, a week at camp, emergency assistance, support for post-secondary education, a holiday experience or a child's first Raptors game, our goal remains the same: to respond with dignity, create opportunity and help children, youth and families feel supported, included and connected.

Learn more at durhamcas.ca/foundation



Board of Directors and Senior Staff, 2025/2026*

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*As of March 31, 2026

